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THE

Man of Science and Disciple of Christ:

A SERMON

PREACHED AT

ROSSLYN-HILL CHAPEL, HAMPSTEAD,

ON SUNDAY, NOV. 22ND, 1885,

IN MEMORY OF

W. B. CARPENTER, M.D. C.B., &c.

BY

THOMAS SADLER, PH.D.

WILLIAMS AND NORGATE,

14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON;
AND 20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH.

1885.

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A SERMON.

ISAIAH xi. 2:

"The spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

WHEN we consider the nature and requirements of human society, we cannot but perceive what a complicated thing it is, of how many elements it is made up, what a diversity of gifts it implies. No small amount of capacity of various kinds is employed in the common and necessary business of the world—to feed, to clothe, to house mankind. Then there are the young to be taught; and when we think who have been the best teachers, we see how manifold have been the capabilities and influences they have exercised. We want, too, some who can help us in our sicknesses and infirmities by skill in healing. Statesman wise to rule, philosopher profound in thought, ye likewise have an indispensable place amongst us. And the world of literature is a world within a world, with its historians to tell us the story of the past, its poets to give us our nobler thoughts and cares, its moralists to guide us in our conduct, and all the host of writers represented in every good library. How much we should lose if we had not also amongst us some whose calling it is to beautify our life by art, or touch it "with con-

cord of sweet sounds"! Nor could we do without the prophet to lift up our hearts to unseen things, to kindle our loftiest aspirations and hopes, and to keep sacred to us the heavenly and immortal treasure in our mortal bodies. Even eccentric men have their social worth, just because they are curious about things in which the multitude take no interest, and which yet have an importance of their own and should not be consigned to utter neglect and oblivion.

Manifold and wonderful indeed are the constituents of such a community as that in which we live. Though no two of us are exactly alike, there is room for every one to be true to the gift that is in him, and to be of some service to his fellow-men.

But while it is well that we should at all times bear in mind the range and distribution of human agencies for the common good, there are times which give a more particular direction to our thoughts, as when the death of Lord Lawrence led Dean Stanley to speak of the soldier-statesman, and the deaths of Charles Dickens and Carlyle and Grote and Landseer and Livingstone were made the occasions of enlarging on what may be done for the public benefit respectively by the author, the scholar, the painter, and the missionary. So we naturally think to-day of the high place amongst us which may be occupied by *the man of science.*

When knowledge passes from that stage in which it is simply empirical to the stage in which it becomes a science, the gain is immense. We look back on the age of alchemy and astrology as an age in which the most active-minded men were

led astray by fanciful analogies, accidental experiences, and undisciplined observation, from all useful intelligence into follies, superstitions, and extravagances, which to us are nothing short of amazing. Science reduces this chaos to order, applies searching tests to everything, collects facts, sets them in order, revises them, traces out their relation to one another, generalizes upon them, and continually adds to them. The improvement which has taken place in the physical condition of mankind is largely owing to science. It has been our great teacher as to the laws of health, the causes of disease, the conditions of bodily welfare, so far as these have been ascertained. It is with us in our houses and at our tables, and goes out and comes in with us. When we are on the bed of languishing, it comes to us with its remedies and its alleviations. It has put an end to some of the most fatal diseases. It prolongs human life. It has increased our command over the forces of nature, converted some of them, which appeared to be enemies and appalled us with their might, into most powerful friends, and brought us into acquaintance with others of which we were ignorant. It goes with the sailor on his voyage, his guide in the trackless deep, and his faithful ally against the violence of the tempest. But I am quite incompetent to do anything like justice to the practical usefulness of science. There is not one of us who is not indebted to science in a thousand ways, to which most of us hardly give a thought. And it has its sublimities, appealing to our sense of wonder and awe, especially when it

ascends and reveals to us in the heavens glories even beyond those which lie "expansed before the eyes of all." "It is noticed," says Emerson, "that the consideration of the great periods and spaces of astronomy induces a dignity of mind and an indifference to death." One who had witnessed the transit of Venus across the sun, and was deeply affected by the sight, attributed the impression made upon him, not so much to the majesty, the silence, and the solemnity of the planet's motion, or the ideas of vastness, distance, and unity which were called forth, as to a feeling of wonder at those faculties of the human mind which had been able to discover so much about the laws of the heavenly bodies, and to predict their operation.*

It would be ingratitude to God, it would be stupidity, it would be blindness, not to recognize and rejoice in the grand work which the men of science have done, and are doing, for the benefit of man's estate,—not to look to them for a perhaps greater work in the future—and not to feel the death of one of the foremost of their leaders as a great public loss.

There are, however, many persons who, while freely acknowledging that science has its beneficent side, are prevented from a warm appreciation of it by the tendencies it has manifested in regard to religion. And doubtless some very eminent scientific men have taken up a position which, if not hostile to religion, is at least negative. They do not join any church; they keep aloof from all public worship;

* Duke of Argyll.

and I suppose if all men were to become like them, churches and chapels, religious services, and all the trust and hope and influences of religion, would cease from the land, and the experiment would be tried of living without God in the world. I cannot help thinking that to some extent their attitude may be accounted for by the sort of theology they associate with religion—a theology the corner-stone of which is a belief that the world was created six thousand years ago, and a particular interpretation of what is termed the Fall of man. But this is not the only reason. Another is, that physical science has to do with those things in which man is only a little higher than some other animals, rather than with those things in which he is little lower than the angels. Again, the habit of devoting attention to outward facts may perhaps be unfavourable to a full perception of those inward facts which are the basis of faith; though it is difficult to understand why the testimony of the affections should not be taken into account as well as that of the senses, or why the facts of man's bodily organization should have more stress laid on them than those of his moral and spiritual nature. I think, further, that some men of science have withdrawn from religion through the notion that the subjects with which it deals are beyond all human apprehension, as belonging to the realms of the infinite. But, in truth, is not every discovery of science itself a knowledge attained in the realms of the infinite? We do not touch anything or see anything which is not a part of an infinite universe. All our knowledge is about some little

bit of infinitude. The drop of water and the grain of sand have their relations with the majesty of the ocean, and the mountains, and the immeasurable vastness of the heavens. All our virtues and all our love have an infinite source. All that we think and do brings us into contact with the infinite. If I recollect aright, there is a saying of Carlyle to the effect that "the smallest window opens into the infinite." However much it transcends our thought, it is nevertheless true that in it we "live and move and have our being." To regard the infinite as separated from us by an impassable gulf is to ignore the fundamental conditions of our existence. And no one realized this more than Sir Isaac Newton, to whom all scientific men look up with the utmost reverence as their chief.

Before, however, I leave this part of our subject, let me put in a word against making too much of the scepticism of scientific men. It is often, I am persuaded, represented as more complete and unwavering than it really is. As there are times when the burden of the mystery of life weighs so heavily on the devoutest men that they fervently join in the confession and prayer of old, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief,"—so there are times when the unbeliever has also his misgivings in regard to his doubts. The author to whom I have already referred—the Duke of Argyll—has recorded a deeply interesting conversation between himself and Mr. Darwin, which may serve as an illustration. Adverting to some of the marvellous evidences of purpose in nature which Mr. Darwin had pointed out, the

Duke said it appeared to him impossible to look at these things without recognizing in them the effect and expression of Mind. He adds: "I shall never forget Mr. Darwin's answer. He looked at me very hard, and said, 'Well, that often comes over me with overwhelming force; but at other times'—and he shook his head vaguely—'it seems to go away.'"

The fact, however, that there are some men of science who cannot honestly profess religious belief, increases the importance of the fact that there are others who are equal to them in every respect in powers of mind and in scientific attainments, and who regard the discoveries of science, not only as not antagonistic to religion, but as themselves forming one of the great methods by which the Divine Being has been and is revealing Himself to mankind. If the men of science were all of one mind in giving up religion, this unanimity would unquestionably be staggering to the faith of the thinking man; but the force of the negative witness is broken by the affirmative witness from the same quarter.* And among those who in our day have taken the affirmative side, there is no one whose testimony will be felt to have more weight than that of our revered friend and fellow-worshipper, Dr. Carpenter. He was the intimate friend and companion of Darwin, and others who were in general accord with that great and good man in regard to religion. He held these men in the highest esteem both for their distinguished ability, and for that kind of worth which belongs only to the

* Darwin himself, with characteristic candour, readily acknowledged this.

character. He freely gave them credit for that love of truth which was a marked characteristic in himself. He sympathized with some of the things they had to say, even about religion itself. But there was one respect, deeply affecting the heart and life of a man, in which he differed from them, viz. in his faith in God. There was one place where he parted company with them—the door of the house of prayer, where he entered in, and lifted up his voice and his heart in supplication and praise with the congregation of worshippers. In the existing relations of science and religion, I think I am justified in declaring that there are very few men whose religious profession and religious teaching are of so much importance as those of Dr. Carpenter. What most of us think about religion does not matter beyond a small circle; but in these times the conclusions to which *he* came do matter to a large number of thinking men, and perhaps to some who do not think for themselves.

Was it that the memory of the old home at Bristol acted like a spell upon him, and hardly left him free to depart from the customs of his childhood? Ah, my friends, I think to have been brought into close contact with a man of the stamp of Dr. Lant Carpenter, of Bristol, leaves an impression which is never effaced; and it could not be otherwise than that, with a son in whom family ties were always exceptionally strong, the influence of the old Bristol home remained to the last hour of his life. But in that home he breathed no less the air of mental freedom than the spirit of piety. And I think it would be difficult to find any man who more tho-

roughly thought out the great religious questions for himself. Nor can it be said that the speculations which were rife about him, and the "eclipse of faith" in some of his associates for whose opinions he had the greatest respect, never at any time caused his belief to falter, or cast a shadow over his soul; but with the characteristic strength and clearness of his mind, he carefully examined and considered all that had been said and written on the questions at issue. Does the theory of natural selection invalidate what is termed the argument of design? His matured answer to this question, given in a lecture at which I was myself present, was, that so far from invalidating the argument, this theory widens and heightens our idea of creative purpose and foresight. In like manner, the questions bearing more directly on Christianity were answered very much as the question of old was answered: "Will ye also go away?" "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." To an ardent lover of science, such as our friend was, it was much to bear a name honoured among the greatest names in the scientific world; but to that name, in the present instance, was appended by himself, as the result of earnest conviction, a name which was to him the most satisfactory expression of his Christian faith—*disciple of Jesus Christ*, a learner of Christ, a seeker after the mind and spirit of Christ.

Dr. Carpenter's connection with this congregation began between thirty-eight and thirty-nine years ago, and to those of us who can look back so far is memorable for its immediate effect on our psalmody, in

which his assistance was most valuable and seasonable, adding greatly to the interest of our religious services.* At his suggestion, and with his aid, an organ was provided and a choir was formed; and he was himself our organist, and presided over our choir for about fifteen years. Though modest in his estimate as to what he could do and could not do on his favourite instrument, he had more than ordinary power to give expression to the sentiment of a hymn and the devotional feelings of the congregation. We shall not forget the regularity of his attendance, and the pains he took, or perhaps I should rather say the pleasure he took (for I believe it was so), not only in the Sunday services, but also in meetings for practice and in the compilation of a selection of tunes. And from the first he has taken an active and liberal part in everything we have done, down to our last and not quite completed effort to render our place of worship more commodious, more hospitable, more beautiful; though, like some others of us, he felt that it was for the sake of those who would come after him, rather than for any difference to himself. And, as I need not tell you, to not a few of us fellowship in worship brought with it a friendship which might always be relied on for warmth of sympathy, and for the help which, by counsel or otherwise, a true friend rejoices to be able to render. In the long and intimate acquaintance of nearly forty years, there have been with me and mine, as with all of us, times of sickness,

* We had previously a single leader of the singing, who gave out the tune and sung it, the congregation joining as best they might. We had, however, held meetings for practising hymns, and there was a project for the purchase of a harmonium.

sorrow, and anxiety; and in these times his kindness had invariably in it the tenderness of a brother. His rare intellectual powers were known and lauded far and wide; but those who were near him and really knew him will think of him as also a man of the deepest feeling. I recollect that one Sunday, when I had been trying to get to the soul of good in the marred and painful body of things evil, he made the remark, that of all the ways in which troubles might be to us a blessing, none had struck him more than their obvious place as affording occasions for the exercise of sympathy.

This brief sketch of our departed friend would not be true to the life without some reference to the wide range of his interests. Though the fields of scientific research were those in which he chiefly laboured, he by no means confined himself to them. He was no stranger in those chambers of imagery which the great painters and sculptors have provided as a treasure and a delight. His reading extended to other departments of literature than that to which his own contributions more especially belonged. To have been deprived of music as a medium for the expression of his own feelings, and as a source of enjoyment, would have been like the loss of a limb to his body. He was a delightful companion; the conversation was sure to turn to interesting subjects, on which, in a most genial way, he would bring forth of his treasures new and old. The number and variety of the institutions in which he took an active part, show how manifold are the instrumentalities which he thought should be united in the endeavour to make

our world better and happier than it is. Direct efforts to alleviate the condition of the poor had his cordial co-operation; but so also had enlightened opinion as an agency of progress. His catholicity of spirit did not lessen his sense of denominational duty in bearing witness to the truth. The education of the people was with him a main hope for mankind; and in furtherance of this, he himself was ever ready to make his own vast knowledge available. His clearness as an expounder enabled him to speak to a miscellaneous gathering in a school-room as effectively as to a class of students in the theatre of a University; and I think it may be truly said of him, as was said of the Master to whom he looked up as his great spiritual teacher and guide, that "the common people heard him gladly."

To most of us it is not easy to understand how he could have found time for all that he did. The explanation is, in part, that his gifts and capacities were so much beyond the ordinary; and partly, that he was an insatiable worker, and lost no time in trivialities. Most of us cannot do without trivialities; they are to us as necessary as the unstringing of the bow; but it was not so with him. It has been said that he did the work of two men as his work, and the work of a third as a recreation. Even in those holiday seasons, in which perhaps it would have been well for him to have had more entire rest, he could not help mingling with the enjoyment of external beauty or grandeur explorations after the hidden things which Nature has for those who, not content with simply basking in her sunshine and

admiring her exterior, seek a fuller knowledge of herself. Or there were working men who would like a lecture at their institute, or there was some meeting at which his presence was desired.

My friends, I am aware of the natural effect of personal affection and admiration on the estimate we form of those whom we have recently followed to the grave; but to any one who knew Dr. Carpenter as I knew him, I am sure my words will seem only words of soberness and truth. Of all the rare combination of high qualities to which I have referred, there is not one which has not suggested itself to me in connection with some remembrance associated with time and place. That he had "the spirit of knowledge," as few have had it, is known throughout the world; but he had also "the spirit of the fear of the Lord:" yes, the spirit of devotion, and the spirit of truth, and the spirit of harmony, and the spirit of work, and the spirit of well-doing, and the spirit of righteousness, and the spirit of love. He is gone; but he has left us the "one adequate support for the calamities of mortal life:"

> "An assured belief
> That the procession of our fate, howe'er
> Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
> Of infinite benevolence and power;
> Whose everlasting purposes embrace
> All accidents, converting them to good."

Amen.

PRINTED BY C. GREEN & SON, 178, STRAND.